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ABSTRACT

Presented in this paper is a framework to examine environmental influences on learning. The framework identifies factors from several environments--the home, the community, and the larger sociocultural context--and links them with school policy and operations. Methodological considerations important to further investigation of these environmental links are also discussed. This introductory inquiry into the topic of community influences is intended to set forth a paradigm guiding research at the University of Oregon's Center for Educational Policy and Management. To do so, research linking environmental influences to schooling and student learning is reviewed. The manner in which these influences affect school governance, student learning, and management of human resources at the school and classroom levels is explored and several theoretical approaches to studying these links are discussed. Finally questions flowing from this inquiry are proposed in the form of a research agenda. (Author/JM)

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Community Influence on Schools

and Student Learning

by

Carolyn A. Lane and James G. Kelly

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COMMUNITY INFLUENCES ON SCHOOLS AND STUDENT LEARNING

by

Carolyn A. Lane and James G. Kelly

I. INTRODUCTION

Even a casual observer today notes that schooling, like other public undertakings, is affected by a variety of influences not stemming directly from educators or schools. This paper presents a framework to examine environmental influences on schooling, those purposeful activities that take place in schools to guide and support learning. The framework will identify factors from the various environments that impinge on schools--the home, the community, and the larger sociocultural context--and link them with school policy and operations. Methodological considerations important to further investigation of these environmental links will also be discussed.

Along with similar investigations of legal-administrative processes (Kehoe et al. 1981) and the education professions (Hersh et al. 1981), this introductory inquiry into the topic of community influences is intended to elaborate the paradigm now guiding NIE-funded research at the University of Oregon's Center for Educational Policy and Management (Duckworth 1980). To do so, research linking environmental influences to schooling and student learning will be reviewed. The manner in which school governance, the management of human resources at the school and the classroom levels, and student learning are affected by these influence processes will be illustrated and several theoretical approaches to studying these links discussed.

Finally, questions flowing from this inquiry will be proposed to stimulate further research.

In conceiving environments outside the immediate school, we distinguish between influences emanating from formal systems, whether legal or organizational in nature, and those from informal systems. This paper focuses on nonformal influences of the family and home, of the local school district milieu, and of the larger sociocultural context. Environmental factors that are directly educational are included, along with those affecting the school's educational program or work agenda, allocation of resources, and work incentives. Excluded from consideration are those influences derived from the school environment itself (for example, discipline policy) as well as variables that are not mediated by schooling, such as student birth order in family.

One particularly powerful construct for investigating and understanding the constellation of educational environments as the learner interacts with them and they with each other is Bronfenbrenner's research paradigm, the experimental ecology of education (Bronfenbrenner 1976). He proposes that whether and how people learn depends on two sets of relations: those between the characteristics of learners and the characteristics of their surroundings, and those among the various environments of the learner, for example, home, school, and community. He further posits that fruitful research must be carried out in real educational settings, not laboratories, and be based on systematic contrast between two or more environmental systems, or their structural components (Bronfrenbrenner 1976, p. 5). The ecology of education comprises both sets of relations.

In this study, the school will be conceived as an open system, nested within the context of the local community and the macro-environment and overlapping with the home environment (see Figure 1). The relationship of learner to each environment, and the relationships among the various environments will be the focus of inquiry. By clarifying the specific influences from each of these environments, examining their interrelationships and impacts on schools and student learning, and exploring the interactive nature of educational processes and outcomes, we aim to expand our knowledge of educational ecology and our ability to organize and educate constructively.

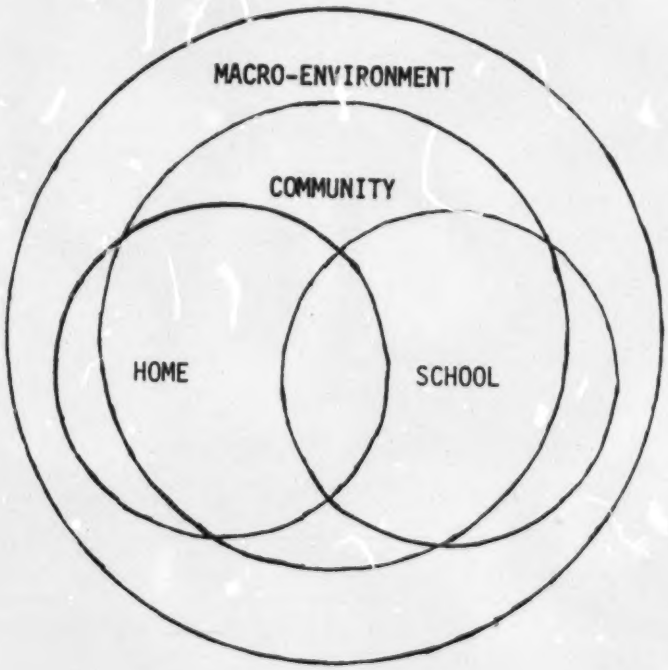

Figure 1

II. ENVIRONMENTS THAT AFFECT SCHOOLS AND STUDENT LEARNING

Three environments that influence student development and achievement will be discussed in this section: the student's family and home environment, the local school district environment, and the macro-environment. Although the home environment has been studied most closely of the three, only more recent investigations have begun to uncover the specific environmental factors that are both highly predictive of student achievement and amenable to improvement through training and partnership with schools.

The dynamics of local school district settings, including community beliefs, patterns of involvement with the school, social climate, and economic resources, bear directly on the availability of school resources and external support for the school program, but usually only indirectly on student learning. At the macro-environmental level, research on nonformal influences includes studies of technological, economic, and cultural factors, but has been sketchy and primarily conceptual or inferential rather than empirical. Recent empirical studies tend to examine cultural value confrontations in the local school district arena.

Family and Home Environment

The environment with the greatest influence on children's cognitive and affective development, as well as on student achievement, is their home (Kifer 1976; Mayeske 1973). Although educators have long recognized its importance, the nature and extent of family influence has been unclear. Studies conducted during the 1960s by Coleman, Jencks, and others did call

attention to the importance of the home environment, but largely with respect to its relative socioeconomic status and structure. Many studies replicated Coleman's findings with regard to family background variables such as income, parental occupation and education, race, structure (one or two parents, other adults), and mobility. Most demonstrated moderate-to-high correlations with student achievement, but were insufficient to explain why and how the relationships were important.

Other researchers began instead to look at family and home process variables, rather than status variables, in order to find what parents do to encourage or support the educational achievement and related attitudes of their children. Kifer's analysis of home environment studies showed three major dimensions of the home to affect student achievement: verbal characteristics, activities congruent with expectations and demands of school, and general cultural level (Kifer 1976). Another set of studies by Maccoby and others looked at family socialization processes to try and understand the basis for gender and ethnic-differentiated achievement in school.

At about the same time, the theoretical work of Murray and Bloom on personality development through the environmental press, such as the press for language that is evidenced by parental encouragement and other factors, stimulated research on press variables related to both cognitive and affective growth. Investigators including Dave, Wolf, Marjoribanks, and others have now gathered evidence that it is the dynamics of the family learning environment--the active demonstration and utilization of resources, the engagement of parent and child in learning activities and in the subsequent

interpretation of what has been experienced, and the active reinforcement of expectations--that appear to make a difference in children's learning.

These results are similar, perhaps not unremarkably, to what is known about effective teaching practices in classrooms. In fact, between-school regression analyses of data collected for the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement by Wolf (1979) concludes that the amount students learn in school depends on the extent to which the subject taught is largely school-based or not (for example, science is taught primarily in school while reading is learned in school and many other environments).

A quantitative analysis of 18 comprehensive studies over a 19-year period in eight countries was conducted by Iverson and Walberg (1979). Their findings show that correlations of intelligence, motivation, and achievement are considerably higher with indexes of parent stimulation of the student in the home than with indexes of socioeconomic status.

Based on these findings, Marjoribanks argues that parent involvement and intervention programs have often had minimal success in boosting student performance because they attempt to change only the affective qualities of the family environment. In a Chicago program to help parents create conditions in their homes for facilitating their children's academic achievement, Walberg, Bole, and Waxman (1977) showed that intensive parent involvement led to more than a one-grade equivalent in student reading achievement over the course of one year, whereas less involvement led to only a half-grade gain. These findings are confirmed by research showing that the most effective kinds of parent participation are regular home

instruction (Barth 1979) or tutoring (Henderson and Swanson 1974) and working as aides with teachers and children in the classroom setting (Bronfenbrenner 1974). Concomitantly, one of the most significant school variables in raising student achievement is the total amount and hours per week of homework assigned to students (Garner 1980).

Another major influence on children's learning found in the home environment is, of course, television. Children now spend more time watching television than going to school; in 1975 a typical 16-year-old was estimated to have spent 15,000 hours viewing television (Siegal 1975). The attitudes and behavior of children are affected by regular programming and advertising alike (Liebert 1975), but effects, both positive and negative, are complex and vary with age (Mukerji 1977). Gordon (1979) suggests that television's popularity can be attributed to several characteristics, two important to this discussion: television does not criticize the viewer, and children see it legitimized by and with adults.

Research has tended to concentrate on television's impact on children's prosocial behavior and attitudes, for example, helping others or feeling positively towards people of different races; on antisocial behavior and attitudes, particularly as related to aggression and violence; on direct learning, as in reading and enumeration skills; on incidental learning, such as consumer preferences; and on viewing habits (Searcy and Chapman 1972; Comstock 1978; Clark 1978). Although television has been shown to be an effective medium for stimulating learning in and of itself (Clark 1978), investigators have also found that parental interaction and support significantly enhance children's ability to learn from television (Flood 1974; Walling 1976).

For example, Salomon (1973) examined the cognitive and affective development of 93 five-year-old kindergarten children, drawn about equally from lower- and middle-class families. This group was divided according to the amount of encouragement offered by mothers as they viewed Sesame Street with their children. He found that the greatest gains were made by children from families of lower socioeconomic status. This finding supports the proposition that it is mediating factors in the home environment --in this case, active parental encouragement of viewing--that is related to student gains and that these factors may be more commonly present in upper- and middle-class home environments.

Local District Environment

The local community environment of school districts is a second realm of the educational ecology that influences human resource management and governance in schools. Work resources, work incentives, and work agenda in schools are all affected by community demography and support for the educational program. In addition, community resources dedicated to educational purposes and patterns of citizen involvement with schools are important.

Local demographic trends differ for each community, of course, but school work resources and agenda depend directly on student population characteristics. If numbers are declining, the school district must decide whether to close facilities and curtail or consolidate curriculum offerings, to seek new clientele from the adult population, or to expand services to its current clientele, for example, by entering the field of early childhood education. If a district is expanding, how can it obtain new facilities,

revise the curriculum to match expectations of the new population, and identify new programs that may be needed for children who do not speak English or for pre-school children whose parents are both employed?

The role of community-based interest groups (nonprofessionals) in determining the school's work agenda has grown since the 1960s, as national social movements such as those for civil rights, ethnic self-determination, and student rights were translated locally into advocacy for curriculum differentiation, bilingual education, and revised student suspension policies (Kirst and Garms 1980). More recently, opponents of particular textbooks, or curricula, such as Man: A Course of Study (MACOS), or courses teaching Darwin's theory of evolution as the only explanation for the development of life have initiated local campaigns to change school policies and procedures.

Kirst and Garms (1980) predict that the influence of community-based groups attempting to affect school policies and procedures will grow in the 1980s, even as Dye and Zeigler (1970) demonstrate that fewer and fewer citizens are participating in the traditional democratic process to influence schools, that of voting. When they do vote, more people are voting "no."

From 1962 to 1972, voter-approved school bond issues nationwide dropped from nearly 70 percent to less than 45 percent, a decline of 25 percent. In part because of their dwindling enrollments, local schools face more competition for public fiscal support. In addition, the voting sector of the population with school-age children is declining, and the proportion of older citizens is ballooning. Older populations are more likely to be property owners and to feel the bite of increased taxes for schools,

as well as to have a different set of priorities for community services. Piele and Hall (1973) summarize this trend: ". . . in the early 1960s voter approval was frequently viewed as a formality. Today, however, voter approval is often the most significant hurdle facing school officials attempting to meet specific educational demands and needs" (p. 2).

Ad hoc advocacy groups organized around a succession of school program issues appear to be growing. However, their characteristics and dynamics are not yet well understood. A study of 16 community organizations in Atlanta, Boston, and Los Angeles, Gittell (1980) concluded that such groups lose their effectiveness as they move from advocacy to service and become part of the educational establishment. Moore (1980) is tracing the strategies of citizen groups that have been successful in stimulating improvements in local educational programs and services and translating findings into long-term training and assistance to parent and citizen groups in other districts. Kelly (1980) is investigating the effectiveness of citizen group leaders in relation to diverse community climates. These studies are all aimed towards improving school-community interaction as a means to improving education.

The Macro-Environment

Almost all conditions in the larger society influence in varying degrees what takes place in classrooms, asserts Duke (1979), who then demonstrates how environmental factors affect classroom discipline, resource allocation, division of labor, and decision-making. Likewise, schools are organizations influenced by a range of technological, economic, demographic,

cultural, and historical forces, linked together as the largest context in which schools operate.

Technology. The wave of advanced technology that hit the educational system in the 1960s first reinforced the production model of schooling adopted during the heyday of industrial expansion (Callahan) and summarized more recently by Dreeben. Secondly, concepts borrowed from systems theory and operations research have led in the direction of expanded programs and projects to meet specific educational purposes, along with a concomitant diversification and specialization in school staff roles. Planning, public information, grants and contracts, research and evaluation, testing, and staff training specialists are now found as district employees or consultants working with teachers and principals. In some cases, this trend has been accelerated by state mandates, for example, those requiring evaluation of specific programs funded from external sources or those establishing competency-based high school graduation or teacher certification requirements.

Clearly, the implications for school organization and administration are manifold. Wolcott's study, Teachers versus Technocrats (1977) amply documents one district's struggles following its decision to switch to a program planning and budgeting system. Such district policies seek to improve school effectiveness by augmenting the resources teacher have available, either as supporting systems or instructional systems (i.e., computer-assisted instruction). As Duke (1979) points out, however, they often exert additional demands on teachers without conferring corresponding authority (p. 360).

Economics. Other environmental pressures have followed a similar pattern. Economic influences in the larger society have resulted in the press for school accountability in both its production functions and its production functions and its products (educated students). Cost-effectiveness is a primary criterion for assessing school operations. Proposed voucher systems that would allow for family selection of the schools their children attend apply free market economics to a previously "domesticated" sector of society (Carlson).

Demography. Four major demographic trends with implications for schools have been documented by the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment (1977):

1. Declining birth and fertility rates, discussed earlier, and the increasing rates of family formation and dissolution
2. Changing family patterns, particularly the growth of single-parent families and large-scale entry of women into the work force
3. Increased immigration, concentrated in metropolitan areas, accounting for roughly one-quarter of the nation's population growth
4. Migration from the northeast and midwest to the coastal regions, particularly the south and west; migration from cities to previously rural locales and, in some areas, to suburbs

Expectations are for elementary school enrollment to continue to decline through the mid-1980s, and for high school enrollments to decrease by 25

percent, even up to 1990. Urban school systems have been hardest hit by these trends since it is in cities that the needs for diversified services are accelerating while tax bases are eroding. The 187 largest school districts enroll more than one-quarter of all students; the 10 largest urban areas house more than one-third of all legal immigrants; most single-parent families live in cities, and such families comprise roughly 40 percent of all poverty-level families.

Associated with these factors is a surge of private school enrollment, up 40 percent in 10 years for nonCatholic schools to a total of 4.5 million students in 1977, more than 10 percent of total school enrollment. One explanation for this shift is Anglo avoidance of minority children (Wilson 1977), but minority families with money are also moving their children to private schools.

The implications of these demographic trends for schools are not yet well understood in terms that would lead to amelioration of the conditions affecting schools. The state of the art remains at the level of gross variable studies, such as those showing significant correlations between single-parent families and low student achievement. Believing that single-parent homes are not poor learning environments, in and of themselves, researchers like Levine, Kukuk, and Meyer (1979) still do not understand the operational features that may distinguish them from intact families as they affect student achievement.

One interesting proposition, derived from Giles' (1978) analysis of outmigration of whites from urban areas, is that normative thresholds exist that govern behavior. Before the threshold is reached, people will adapt to adverse conditions; beyond the threshold, their behavior will show

a greater change. Giles showed the threshold of population stability in school districts, for example, to be roughly 30 percent black enrollment, beyond which whites move to a different district. Other environmental thresholds may exist, such as amount and kind of parent-child interaction, to which learning is directly related.

A final note concerning demographic trends is that ". . . the removal of a substantial portion of the prosperous middle class from the school system could have a direct effect of subverting the democratic objectives of school systems through egalitarian participation" (U. S. Office of Technology Assessment, 1977, p. 291).

Culture and Society. Cultural influences on school systems today, however, stress the utilitarian value of education for individuals (Gowin and Gree 1980) rather than its democratic objectives for the community. Within this general framework, ". . . one of the greatest causes of concern for educators is the absence of clear-cut cultural directives" (Duke 1979, p. 356). Movements range from Back-to-the-Basics, aimed at finding a useful common denominator for schooling, to Career Education or Competency-based Education, aimed at specifying the set of adult roles students are expected to assume after graduating from high school and the level of skills and knowledge they will need to function effectively in each role.

Nowhere is the heterogeneity of cultural influences demonstrated more clearly than in textbook publishing and adoption. Pressures from ethnic and women's groups to portray their roles in American history and society more completely began in earnest in the 1960s, also a time when large-scale curriculum development in science, mathematics, and social studies was

undertaken by university scholars (Schaffarzick 1979). Almost immediately following the adoption of these new textbooks and curricula, individuals and groups began to object to their use on grounds of irrelevance, bias against traditional values and historic figures, and covert support for selected political beliefs and programs.

Controversy erupted at the local school district level, for example, over textbooks in West Virginia in 1974 and over the MACOS curriculum (Parker 1976). Various groups, organized for nationwide information-sharing and rating of textbooks, began to lobby effectively with local school boards as they selected textbooks. A few, most notably a group in Texas, now review and suggest revisions to manuscripts prior to their publication, since publishing firms cannot economically produce multiple variations on a single textbook to please a variety of audiences.

Historic Events. A final set of influences on schools from the macro-environment are those formed from momentous events or eras that we come to call historic. In recent times, the launching of the Sputnik satellite, man's first journey to the moon, the Watergate burglary and ensuing presidental resignation, and the Vietnam War all qualify as having affected the schools' governance, production capacities, or productivity.

The first event stimulated an emphasis on science and mathematics curricula as described earlier, and therefore affected the priority placed on science and mathematics subjects within the school program, as well as on the allocation of resources to facilities, materials, equipment, and even to teacher training. The second event reinforced the emphasis on science and math but also offered advanced planning tools like PERT and CPM

to school administrators. No less important, the moon landing captured the imagination of children who found new incentives for studying geometry, geology, and lunar geography.

Watergate and the Vietnam War have been no less powerful but have had different effects. A concern for ethics among school officials emerged, backed up by the possibility of legal action. Student rights issues clustered around the freedom to express political views on the war and individual moral responsibility for one's actions, affecting administrative procedures as well as student readiness and incentives to learn.

More difficult to assess and extrapolate, the public mood appeared to drift towards apathy or cynicism, part of which was directed towards all public institutions, including schools. Other future events may mitigate these consequences and lead to different public attitudes, values, and subsequent behavior. What is important to remember is that values and attitudes also <u>follow</u> behavior (Festinger 1957). Educational programs like Moore's Designs for Change or parent involvement in Head Start (Brown 1978) can themselves affect student learning, assist parents in enhancing their home learning environment, mobilize the local community as an educational resource for schooling, and to some degree influence our intentions and pursuit of educational excellence.

III. RESEARCH AGENDA

Six topics are presented in this section as priorities for empirical research. The general focus of these topics is how schools perceive, analyze and address environmental forces and events for educational advantage. The first topic, aimed at conceptual models, lays the groundwork for investigating person-subject-setting interactions in all school environments. The second topic is designed to investigate how schools develop and maintain the balance between openness to environmental forces and protection of their educational mission, and the characteristics of such schools and their administrators. The third topic considers the qualities and activities that make individual community leaders resources for schools. The fourth topic, television as a learning resource, provides a specific focus for assessing the ways in which school react to a major environmental force. The fifth and sixth topics are aimed at improving administrative decisions made in schools by taking into account important features of home and community environments.

The authors believe that these topics, derived from the analysis and commentary in the text, also affirm the agenda for CEPM.

1. Development Conceptual Models to Study the Effects of External Events Upon Schooling.

The literature available on the influence of external factors affecting schools is suggestive, but only of indirect effects. Much of this literature implicitly defines the schools as a closed system, e.g., when external events occur outside the school and affect the school, the events are perceived as intrusive, unjust surprises. There are few examples of

systematic efforts to develop analytical models that focus upon how external events directly and indirectly alter schooling and upon how resources are allocated for schooling. What is recommended is the support of systematic research and documentation on the school as an "open" system, with directed empirical effort to specify how community events (such as economic successes and downturns, disasters, national policy events, community political debates) affect both directly and indirectly the climate of opinion about schools and the policies and behavior of schools.

The present authors believe that public schools, as one social system connected with other social systems within the community, are not only vulnerable to external events and circumstances, but that such events create new opportunities for program development. At the present time there is no language available to educators to clarify the impact of external events, except for the language of common sense or expressions of confusion and exasperation. What is needed are points of view and frameworks that reduce the perception that events are beyond one's control.

2. Conduct Empirical Studies on the Qualities of Schools that Facilitate Communication and Use of External Resources.

As a corollary of the first research agenda item, it is recommended that empirical research be conducted to elaborate the characteristics of those school systems that define as resources citizens with talent, other organizations with similar objectives, and national informational resources and to illustrate how these resources can affect school policy.

It is the authors' opinion that there are multiple factors at different levels of the school organization that contribute to a resilient and responsive use of resources, including a history of sustained support for innovation, social norms for openness, an active social network with citizens, and an organizational structure that enhances an outreach orientation into the community. It is our belief that there is an interaction of personal, organizational and situational factors that contributes to the "open" behavior of the social organization.

While school officials and influentials give testimony and present anecdotal reports that such responsive and open organizations do exist, there is no published report of systematic empirical investigations of this type of organization known to the authors.

Understanding the correlates and determinants of responsive school organizations can be of direct and tangible help for the administration of school systems and for enlightenment of school officials. This recommendation supports the analysis and understanding of proactive school organizations and of the citizens and school personnel who are members of such organizations. This particular recommendation, which advocates comparative research of school organizations, is complementary to the first recommendation and focuses upon the school as a key and critical unit.

3. Research on the Personal Qualities and Social Networks of Citizens who are or Aspire to be Resources and Advocates for School.

Complementary to the above two recommendations, this recommendation focuses upon the qualities and circumstances of citizens. It is recommended that empirical inquiry focus upon the variety of roles that citizens can perform--advocates for improved education, tutors, or teacher aides.

It is essential to know more about the variety of contexts that enhance citizens serving as resources for schools. Of particular interest is the clarification of how citizens initially become connected to the school organization and how they are able to maintain their proactive activity over time. This topic is suggested as a study of the relationship between individual citizens and their social structure along with a study of the personal qualities of citizens. The authors are recommending that priority be given to the social network of the individual citizen and the structure and functions of such social networks. It is assumed that the expression of the proactive role is related to participation in a social network where resources, such as social-emotional support, ideas, funds, and access to political influence, are made available to the citizen. Of particular importance is the examination of interpersonal skills and personal qualities of individuals that enhance the creation and maintenance of social networks, for the maintenance and development of social networks can be assisted by the personal qualities of the members who belong to them. Current sociological research on social networks does not focus either upon the qualities of persons in the networks or upon the interaction between the members of the network structure.

Conducting research on this topic can enhance the creation and maintenance of social networks that include persons who are investing in school policy.

4. Empirical Inquiry on the Role of Adults as Resources for Children's Learning during Television Viewing.

The suggested link between school learning and parental participation in children's television watching cited in the text offers a potential antidote to the negative effects of children's solitary television viewing. With the likely addition of new cable channels and the growth in the uses of television as an educational resource, it will become an increasingly integral part of the daily activities of children. The role of adults, particularly of parents as television viewers themselves, offers the opportunity to understand how to reduce passive elements of viewing and to increase the opportunities to use television viewing as an active educational process.

This recommendation also provides an opportunity to investigate specific qualities of the home environment that contribute to predicting children's learning abilities. It is important to consider television watching as a critical social setting--a specific place and time event sequence--which illustrates the interaction between adults and children within the household. Television watching then becomes a catalytic event to clarify and elaborate the child-parent relationship. Parent-child television viewing can be assessed as a potentially positive force in the educational development of the child and as a positive resource for the socialization of parent-child relationships.

It is hoped that such research can indicate how technological innovations can become educational resources when the context for parent-child learning interactions is understood.

5. Investigate the Similarities/Differences in Effective Teaching Processes that Occur in the Home and the Classroom.

There is in the literature some evidence that specific teaching practices are of primary importance to children's learning, whether these practices occur in the classroom between teacher and child or whether they occur in the home between parent and child. There is also some evidence that these processes can be mutually reinforcing if found in both settings and can bring about greater learning than if they occur only in one setting or the other. Few comparative studies have examined these questions, and of those, fewer still have incorporated a broad enough range of variables to be useful.

It is recommended that research to delineate these processes and their relationships to the home and school environments be undertaken. Of particular importance to this research is the need to illustrate how parents and teachers can collaborate in stimulating and reinforcing children's learning. School policies and strategies to support this collaboration are envisioned as possible consequences of such research.

6. Study the Various "Threshold" Effects that have Implications for how Schools are Organized and Administered.

The literature contains many examples of differential gains among children in similar learning situations, apparently based on readiness differences among subgroups according to the relative proportions of various subgroups in the total group. Children from families with lower socioeconomic status, for example, might make greater gains than children from

families of higher socioeconomic status, but only if their proportion in the learning setting does not exceed or drop below a certain level. Children in recently desegregated settings show the same phenomenon. Children in classrooms that are neither too small (with, perhaps, too few resources) nor too large (where the social system may be overwhelming for the individual) appear to gain more than children in other situations.

Demographic studies have shown that relative threshold levels can be determined that offer implications for how and when school attendance policies can affect neighborhood stability and, thus, the quality of school life and the learning attainment of students. Studying other school threshold levels would have clear implications for student assignment to classes, grouping in classrooms, and attendance policies, to name a few.

Summary. These six research avenues are presented as topics to explore how community events and community variables affect schooling. The six topics are considered to be interdependent with one another, with the preliminary findings presented earlier in this paper, and with the working research agenda of CEPM.

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